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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 MC-02 SS-15 SP-02 INR-07 L-03
/044 W
----------280718Z 007061 /17 R
P 271644Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2607

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 9012

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, MASS, LE
SUBJECT: GOL REQUESTS ASSISTANCE IN EQUIPPING SECURITY FORCES

REF: BEIRUT 8923

1. THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR DR SALMAN, WHO IS A FRIEND, ASKED ME TO HIS HOUSE EVENING DEC 25. HE EXPLAINED THAT HE WISHED TO RAISE AN EXTREMELY URGENT MATTER -- THE RE-EQUIPMENT OF THE LEBANESE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES. HIS PRESENTATION WAS SIMILAR TO REFTEL.

2. HE NOTED THAT PRESIDENT SARKIS ATTACHED TOP PRIORITY TO THE RE-EQUIPMENT OF ISF AND RECALLED THAT THE PRESIDENT EMPHASIZED THE POINT IN ONE OF HIS PRESIDENTIAL SPEECHES BY SAYING "FIRST SECURITY -- THEN BREAD." HE HIMSELF HAD DEVOTED ALL HIS TIME TO SECURITY TO THE EXTENT THAT HE HAD DONE LITTLE WORK ON HIS OTHER PORTFOLIO -- THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING. DESPITE HIS EFFORTS, THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR WAS POWERLESS TO ENFORCE THE LAWS BECAUSE THE SECURITY FORCES LACKED UNIFORMS, ARMS, TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS. THE FORCE TOTALLED 7500 MEN, OF WHOM 5000-6000 WERE "COMBAT FORCES" AND THE REMAINDER WERE ADMINISTRATIVE WORKERS. THE FORCE HAD FEW SIDEARMS LET ALONE AUTOMATIC RIFLES, HAD JUST ONE LANDROVER, AND NO RADIO COMMUNICATIONS. MESSAGES WERE SENT BY
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HAND. CONSEQUENTLY, GOL HAD TO RELY 100 PERCENT ON THE SYRIANS FOR SECURITY. SALMAN INDICATED ISF WAS REINSTALLING TRAFFIC POLICE (SOME ARE ALREADY BACK) AS UNIFORMS BECOME AVAILABLE. THEY WERE DOING SOME TRAINING BUT A LOT MORE WAS NECESSARY. IT WAS, HOWEVER, IMPOSSIBLE DO MORE UNTIL ISF SECURED

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EQUIPMENT.

3. AS FAR AS OTHER POSSIBLE SOURCES OF SUPPLY WERE CONCERNED, SYRIANS HAVE AGREED PROVIDE SOME AUTOMATIC WEAPONS AND SIDEARMS. IN NEXT FEW DAYS, SALMAN EXPECTS DELIVERY OF UNIFORMS FROM THE FRENCH WHO ARE GIVING THEM GRATIS. HE HAD ASKED FRENCH FOR OTHER EQUIPMENT, BUT THE FRENCH WOULD ONLY SELL THEM EQUIPMENT, ALTHOUGH POSSIBLY AT HALF PRICE. (FRENCH MILITARY ATTACHE BELIEVES FURTHER FRENCH ASSISTANCE UNLIKELY.) THE BRITISH WERE NOT A PROMISING SOURCE (BRITISH AMBASSADOR CONFIRMED THIS BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE ON LEAVE), AND HE DID NOT SEEM TO BE COUNTING ON THE GERMANS. WHAT THEY NEEDED DESPERATELY WERE M-16'S, JEEPS AND ARMORED CARS AND A TWO-WAY RADIO COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD BE SENDING US A LIST OF EQUIPMENT NEEDS DEC 27 AND AGAIN STRESSED THE URGENCY INVOLVED. HE NOTED THAT BY LAW THE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCE COULD NOT ITSELF TECHNICALLY ORDER SUCH EQUIPMENT WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE DONE THROUGH THE LEBANESE ARMY.

4. I ASKED HIM WHAT WERE THE PROSPECTS OF GETTING EQUIPMENT BACK FROM SOME OF THE MILITIAS. HE SAID THAT HE HAD RAISED THIS QUESTION WITH PIERRE GEMAYEL AND HIS SON BECHIR. THEY HAD PROMISED TO HELP, BUT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THEM, GIVEN GEMAYEL'S CONCERN THAT FIGHTING MIGHT RESUME AGAIN AND THEY WOULD NOT BE PREPARED FOR IT.

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5. I TOLD HIM THAT I WOULD REPORT HIS REQUEST AND ITS URGENCY TO THE DEPARTMENT. I THEN EXPLAINED OUR LEGAL PROBLEM CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF EQUIPMENT TO INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES. I TOLD HIM THE DEPARTMENT WAS STUDYING THE MATTER, BUT I DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE RESULT WOULD BE.

6. COMMENT: SALMAN WAS OBVIOUSLY HOPING WE COULD PROVIDE EQUIPMENT ON EITHER LOAN OR GRANT BASIS. I WARNED HIM THAT GRANT ASSISTANCE WAS UNLIKELY. WE ARE CURRENTLY TRYING TO CLARIFY "THE LIST," WHICH WE THINK IS THE SAME AS REPORTED (BEIRUT 8655) AND WHICH DEPARTMENT IS NOW STUDYING. WE'LL REPORT RESULTS.

7. I NEED NOT STRESS URGENCY OF REQUEST. IN DEC 27 CALL ON FUAD BOUTROS, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE, HE STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF LEBANESE HANDLING OWN SECURITY PROBLEMS WITH SYRIAN SUPPORT RATHER THAN

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RELYING WHOLLY ON SYRIANS FOR SECURITY.
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